PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

IN THE

HUNDRED AND THIRTY-EIGHTH SESSION

OF THE

RAJYA SABHA

OFFICIAL REPORT

Volume CXXXVm

(Volume CXXXVIIIcontains Ms. r—15)

Nos- —xo (39th April,

1986 to 6th May, 1986)

RAJYA SABHA SECRETARIAT
NEW DELHI

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RAJYA SABHA

Tuesday, the 6th May, 1986/16 *Vaisakha* 1908 *{Saka)*

The House met at eleven o'clock, Mr. Chairman in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

Storage capacity of godowns of Food Corporation of India in Punjab

181. SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: Will the Minister of FOOD AND CIVIL SUPPLIES be pleased to state;

(a) what is the total storage capacity of godowns and their plinth area respectively owned|hired by the Food Corporation of India in Punjab;

(b) what is the capacity added during the current year;

(c) whether it is % fact that shortage of godowns is likely to continue for a number ©f years;

(d) if so, what are the reasons for entering into agreement with private godown owners for only three years at a time; and

(e) whether Government are aware of the difficulties being experienced at the time of renewal of such agreements; K so, what steps 'have been taken in this directions?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND IN 'ITtE MINISTRY OF FOOD AND « IVIL SUPPLIES (SHRI AI1T PANJA): (a) to (e) A statement is 'laid on the Table of the Sabha.

Statement

Ca) As on 1.3.1986, the covered storage capacity with the Food Corporation of India (FCI) in Punjab, owned and hired taken together was 46.6 lakh tonnes. The plinth area of a standard godown of 5,000 tonnes capacity is estimated at 2,655 sq. metres.

(b) During 1985-86, the Corporation added covered storage capacity of 1.64 lakh tonnes >n Punjab. 373 RS—1.

(c) The covered storage capacity available with the Corporation in Punjab is at present not sufficient to store the food-grain stock with the Corporation >n that State. The shortage of adequate storage space in Punjab in the coming years would depend on the procurement of foodgrains m the State, accelerated movement of foodgrains ex-Punjab and success of various measures taken by the Government to reduce the stock level.

(d) The Corporation hires storage capacity from private parties keeping in view its need and operational considerations at each centre. The godowns are hired by the Corporation under its general hiring scheme normally for a period of three years to enable it to reassess the starage requirement at each centre after the expiry of this period.

(e) The main difficulty being experienced 'at the time of renewal of the agreement for hiring the storage capacity is the higher rent demanded by the private parties. Keeping this in view, the Corporation had increased the rent from 33 paise per sq. feet per month up to 60 paise per sq. feet per month in July, 1984. Based on its need, the Corporation a"so hires the storage capacity at higher rent in exceptional cases.

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: Sir, the FCI is the main agency responsible for the execution of the food policies of the Government of India. In Punjab, which is the veritable granary of the country, the FCI, notwithstanding its complacene about its own performance, has not come up to the expectations of the people. Out of the total produce, a good chunk, to the extent of 110 lakh tonnes of foodgrains, is procured by the procurement agencies, but the storage capacity is grossly insufficient. In reply to part (a) of the question, it Iras been mentioned that the covered storage capacity in Punjab as on the 1st March, 1986, was 46.6 lakh tonnes. But in reply to a question last week in a written answer, it was mentioned that the total quantity stored was 40.27 lakh tonnes. I would like the hon. Minister to clarify this discrepancy. Further, as on the 31st March, 1986, 2.78 lakh tonnes of foodgrains

were lying in the oP«« and it resulted in an unaffordable damage to 62,000 tonnes, Sir, another 25 lakh tonnes of foodgrains belonging to...

MR. CHAIRMAN: You have another supplementary.

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: It i$ on the same question. Another 25 lakh tonnes belonging to the State procurement agencies are also lying in the open. In this perspective, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the FCI will lift the foodgrains directly from the Punjab market after procurement by the agencies. And what steps have been taken j0 reduce the stock level in order to reduce this shortage of storage capacity?

SHRI AJIT PANIA: Sir, there are several questions involved in this supplementary. Taking the first one first, as on 1st April, 1986, so far as Punjab is concerned, there were 8 million tonnes °* rice and wheat, and the covered storage capacity was 6-9 million tonnes. The gap, that is the shortfall, was i-1 million tonnes. But they are not kept in the open, but kept under the CAP system, covered area and plinth system. It was alleged that 2.5 million tonnes were kept in the open. It is not in the open. Of course, it was not in covered storage. Wherever there is a shortfall of covered storage, we keep it under the CAP system. We have taken several steps so that the stocks which have accumulated there could be quickly distributed throughout the country wherever it is required. So far as Punjab is conncerned, we have taken several steps. Regarding movement by railways, we wanted to reduce the losses and so we wanted covered wagons. We have been able to persuade the Railways t© give us covered wagons, and the movement is now taking place. The despatch by rail ex-Punjab has already crossed 9 lakhs tonnes per month. This is quite an achievement As for the allegation that it is kept in the open and people are agitated over it, all possible steps are taken. The difficulty, you will realise, js that during a period of eight weeks the entire procurement, transport and distribution take place. This time the Railways have tried to give us as rrfany wagons as possible, but all the time these are not available. But We are taking steps to take t'ne stocks out of Punjab and distribute them to various parts of the country. SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: It is an admitted fact now that there is shortage of storage capacity with the F.C.I, in Punjab. Under the Agriculture Refinance Development Corporation Assistance Scheme, the private parties constructed godowns a number of years back and it is common knowledge that these godowrs have never been kept vacant. Every three years they were again taken by the Corporation. Here, both the F.C.l. as well as the private parties have their own grouse. The case of the F.C.L, as made out in the reply of the hon. Minister is that the private parties ask for enhanced rent and the rent has been enhanced from 33 paise to 60 paise. The grouse of the private parties is that tney «re asked to renew the contract eve-v three years. They have really to run from piliar to post every three years and it takes a lot of time and resources to get the contract renewed. I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether any new scheme would be formulated wherein the contract would be entered into for a longer period postulating a nominal increase in rent every year.

SHRI AJIT PANJA: So far as the new scheme is concerned, the hon. Member must be knowing that we gave an advertisement for the private parties to come forward, under certain terms and conditions, to build u^ -storage which the F.C.I, could take. Till the last date for the receipt of applications, 828 applications had been received out of which 64 applicants have not deposited any earnest money. After Jocking into these applications properly and making arrangements with the bank as regards their loan terms, we will be able to tackle the problem, not fully, but up to a certain limit.

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE- I *urn* unable to catch the difference between neither being covered nor